



**Testimony of Allison Blake, Chief Executive Officer  
Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut**

***In support of***

**S.B. No. 111 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE  
PROGRAMS.**

***Appropriations Committee Public Hearing, March 18, 2022***

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of SB111- An Act Concerning Funding For Child Care Programs

My name is Allison Blake and I am the Chief Executive Office of the Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut. I am writing today to urge you to support an increase in funding for childcare providers and have included a series of recommendations for your consideration.

Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut has been providing childcare services to the New London and Groton areas since 1991. The New London Day Nursery (NLDN) opened in 1991 and the Groton-Mystic Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) opened in 1999. Our childcare programs serve children ages 6 weeks to 5 years of age living in New London, Groton and surrounding towns.

Seventy-three percent of our currently enrolled children/families live at or below the Federal Poverty level. Many of the children we serve have experienced homelessness, food insecurity, are single parented, are in foster care, are under grandparent guardianship and/or have experienced trauma or adverse events in their young lives.

We have appreciated the support of the current Administration and believe they are working hard to address longstanding disparities in funding and other supports for Connecticut's early childhood programs, but the last two years have been extremely difficult due to the necessary public health restrictions which have limited our capacity to provide care. The Board of Child and Family Agency of SECT remains committed to serving these vulnerable populations but are challenged by the burden of raising sufficient funds to underwrite the costs of providing this essential service.

I would also be remiss if I did not point out the incredible work of many of our staff who worked on the frontlines of the pandemic providing care. With the minimum wage increasing over time, childcare workers across the state need a raise! Unfortunately, too many are making a low wage that is not competitive with other jobs and will not keep pace despite recent and planned increases to the minimum wage.

We submit the below recommendations for your consideration and while we recognize these are difficult fiscal times, we believe child care is an essential part of the economic system and therefore must be funded at realistic levels.

Recommendations:

1. **Increase reimbursement for infant/toddler care.** Working parents need access to quality, reliable childcare and right now there is a crisis in access with many businesses closing and eliminating infant toddler care.
2. **Change the Care 4 Kids Subsidy to include families attending adult education or job training.** Currently families are only eligible if they are working. This change would have the potential to open up subsidy for some of our families who are not currently eligible. In addition, much of the Federal monies coming into the states designated for childcare are coming in under the CCDBG funds which support the Care 4 Kids subsidy.
3. **Provide funding to increase compensation for early childhood educators.** Early childhood educators are some of the working poor families in this state. Many of our current and previous teaching staff with young children are and have been eligible for a variety of state funding including Care 4 Kids, housing and food subsidies. Over the years we have lost many good early childhood teachers from the field because they could not afford to make a living wage.

We have also reviewed the OEC Statutory Proposals related to reimbursement and support these two items:

1. **Allow the Office of Early Childhood to administer School Readiness funds through contracts** to reduce burden on providers and agency staff, and align with how other state funding streams are administered. This would allow consistent funding for slots versus fluctuating funding when slots are temporarily vacant. (Amend Sec. 10-16p)
2. **Enable communities to best meet family needs by changing the School Readiness age eligibility to include children 6 weeks to up to 5 years of age**, allowing them to choose to use state funds to serve infants and toddlers. This would allow our programs to have one funding stream for all ages served, versus the two current funding streams, with consistent funding policies & reporting. (Amend Sec. 10-16p)

Thank you for your consideration.

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